

'I went under the knife for my daughter's wedding'

Nikki Jessiman had never been happy with her looks, but she completely reinvented herself for a very special day

I'd changed so much in the last seven years most people didn't recognise me. Now, as I looked in the mirror and saw a woman in a turquoise shift dress, I almost didn't recognise myself either. At 63, I seemed younger than in my forties.

The biggest change was my weight – I'd lost 9st 7lb after having a gastric bypass in 2009. Then this year, in preparation for my daughter Megan's wedding, I had a tummy tuck and facelift. I'd been on a natural high ever since and, now, choosing my outfit for the big day, I was on top of the world.

I'd always been chubby – at school they called me fatty. Looking back, I know I ate too much, but can't put my finger on why. I had a happy upbringing, and none of my four sisters put on weight.

I did marry, but divorced in 1986, aged 33. Megan came along four years later, and bringing her up alone, working as a bookkeeper, she was my priority. I barely noticed my weight creep up from a size 18.

Comfort eating

Eventually hitting 21st 7lb and a size 32, I tried and failed to lose weight. It took a gastric bypass to stop my comfort eating. Though I got down to a size 22, I was left with loose skin that made me depressed. Sadly I wasn't eligible for a tummy tuck on the NHS, and couldn't afford the £10,000-plus to go private.

When Megan, then 24, got engaged to her boyfriend Eparama, who's from Fiji, in Christmas 2014, I was delighted. Yet the

closer we got to the wedding, the more I panicked about what to wear. I never bought dresses because I felt such a frump, but I wanted to look my best for Megan.

A couple of friends had had their boobs done at a clinic in Turkey, Revitalize, and suggested I talk to their surgeon. My mum had recently passed away and my inheritance would pay for the wedding, plus there'd be some left over. I wondered

if I could have surgery in time for the big day.

When my friends went for a check-up in London, I went with them.

The consultant seemed very knowledgeable and told me I was a good candidate for a tummy tuck and breast uplift. I asked about my face, too.

I found out I could have a tummy tuck, breast uplift, facelift, plus neck, mini brow and eye lift for £9,400 – with flights, accommodation and 24/7 care included.

I hate being away from my home in West Sussex and don't like needles. 'Can I really do this?' I asked myself. Megan, always behind me



Before



Nikki didn't notice her weight creeping up



After

Life choices

Nikki with her arm round Megan at the wedding

100%, encouraged me to go for it. So in late March, I set off to Turkey with mixed feelings. I was scared about the op, but couldn't wait to see the results. I stayed at a villa with other women having surgery, and had my tummy and boobs done the first week. Afterwards, they showed me what they'd cut off and it weighed a stone! Even bandaged, I could see the difference.

Amazing results

It was a little painful, but nothing I couldn't cope with and I felt well looked after. The villa was sociable, too. Seeing one woman go through a facelift, and the amazing results, I couldn't wait for mine.

The following week, I was back in theatre. When I came round, I was groggy and couldn't see much, but the next day they changed the bandages and in spite of the swelling, I could tell my neck and face were so different. As each day passed, things got better. It was an amazing transformation.

On the way home, my face bruised, people asked if I was OK. When I said I'd had a facelift and asked them how old I looked, I got two 45s and a 40!

It took about six weeks to fully recover. By the wedding in June, I was free of bruises and down to a size 14-16.

The wedding's a lovely, happy blur, but watching Megan come up the aisle in church made me cry. Eparama wore his traditional Fijian dress and their daughter, Makelesi, was a flower girl.

Looking back at the wedding photos, I'm so glad I had surgery. I haven't had a relationship since Megan's father, but now I feel much more confident and open to the idea. It may be my imagination but I seem to be getting more appreciative glances from men, so who knows?

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